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The Christian's Unbelief

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A BACCALAUREATE SERMON

THE

CHRISTIAN'S UNBELIEF

By

REV. WM. C. ROBERTS, D. D., LL. D.

President Lake Forest University

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JOHN 20: 27.—"*Be not faithless, but believing.*"

OURS is a skeptical age. Its very atmosphere is saturated with doubt. From large portions of its literature rise pestilential exhalations. Not a few of our Colleges and Universities are honeycombed with rationalism. The Professors who cannot utter the Shibboleth of liberalism are often pronounced antiquated, if not unlearned. The dullest students think that they are competent to controvert venerable beliefs, and mere tyros in knowledge challenge doctrines that have been held by the best scholars of past ages.

This skepticism assumes a multitude of forms. In some places, it takes the anti-theistic type, denying the existence of God, or shutting him out of the world; in others, it assumes the anti-biblical, accepting the existence of the Supreme Being, but denying the probability of a verbal revelation; in still others, it takes the anti-propitiational, admitting the supernatural, but denying the necessity of an atonement for sin. In order to commend these views to the popular mind they are often associated with the most plausible forms of contemporary thought. Now they are linked with the attacks made on the credibility of the Pentateuch, and anon mixed with the real or supposed difficulties of reconciling the results of historic researches with the biblical account of creation. At times they are woven

into the web of scientific discoveries in order to prove that certain statements of the inspired writers contradict the teachings of nature. In many quarters, efforts are being made to blot out all that is supernatural.

It is intimated in the context that species of unbelief had crept into the sacred circle of Christ's early disciples. The language of Thomas shows that he had fallen into the dark pit of doubt, if not of downright skepticism. In consequence of it he refused to accept the fact of his Master's resurrection, though attested by more than a dozen of his own trustworthy friends. He came to the conclusion that the happy past he had spent in the Master's company had been but a troubled dream; that the present was anguish of soul; and the future a blank despair. He began to doubt that Christ was the promised Messiah, the Son of the living God, the Prince of Life, because he had suffered death at the hands of wicked men. He gave vent to this unbelief in the extraordinary words: "Except I shall see in his hands the print of the nails, and put my fingers into the print of the nails, and thrust my hand into his side, I will not believe." In all this he was a fair representative of a large class of Christians who lose their hold of some of the comforting truths of Scripture ; who fall into sloughs of despond, and even flounder in the deep morasses of doubt.

The theme here suggested is The Christian's Unbelief. Notice, first, the negative character of this unbelief. There is a wide difference between being unable to accept without more or better evidence, and being convinced that the alleged fact is untrue. The former represents the state of Thomas's mind. He did not allege that the cold clay of his Master's body could not have been animated with new life. He simply declared that he must have more, or different, evidence before he could receive such a fact. He had no sympathy with the views of the resurrection held by the surrounding heathen, who believed that the doctrine was

absurd, looking no higher than to the low region of second causes. He may have shared some of the pride of intellect found among the skeptics of our own day who seek to fathom every truth with the plumb-line not only of reason, but what is immeasurably more preposterous, of their own experience. He did not say, however, that the resurrection of Christ was contrary to nature or experience. He could not have truthfully said that because he himself had witnessed the raising of the widow's son, the calling to life of the ruler's child, and the resurrection of Lazarus from the grave. The most he could have intended by his refusal to accept the testimony of his fellow disciples was that the event was so important and far reaching that he could not believe it without personal knowledge. He shrank from the thought of meeting a new disappointment, and dreaded a repetition of the horror of great darkness he had experienced for many days. There are men among us like the doubting apostle unwilling to permit themselves to accept many of the doctrines of Scripture because they appear too good to be true. They do not deny, but simply fail to accept, them in all their length and breadth, their height and depth. Thus they deprive themselves of a large amount of joy and comfort.

The Christian's unbelief is largely intellectual as well as negative, God's children are differently constituted. Not all of them receive the truth in the same manner. In many the affections are stronger than the understanding; they feel more than they think. Nathaniel was a representative of this class. He was gentle and guileless, doubting nothing told him by those whom he believed to be trustworthy. Thomas belonged to the opposite class. He had received by inheritance a frigid temperament which made him slow to believe pleasant, but swift to accept unpleasant tidings. He carefully thought out every question submitted for his consideration. His reflective powers were

stronger than his susceptible. Though not wanting in strong attachments and noble impulses, his affinity for the truth was largely through the intellect. He was not satisfied so long as there was the slightest possibility of error or delusion. His habit was to prove all things, and hold fast that which was good. He could not understand how the Master, if he was unable to protect himself against death and the grave, could rise victorious over both. The experiences through which he had recently passed were mainly intellectual, and therefore one-sided and defective. Reason of course must be honored and men respected for putting facts to the test of logic, but at the same time it must not be overlooked that we should live but meagerly if we accepted nothing save that which the cold intellect can grasp. For mystery mingles with our most familiar acts, and our confidence in a thousand things must reach beyond the boundary of reason. We have faculties for apprehending knowledge other than those which deal with physical and mathematical verities. The intercourse of hearth and home, the relation of parents and children, and the attachment of brothers and sisters are not established by syllogisms. It would be absurd in a child to undertake to prove by mathematical demonstration his love for a parent. The human heart cannot be probed by sharp, scientific analysis. Man's loves and sympathies are not capable of being expressed in propositions. Nevertheless, the heart knows that it loves a parent, that it can trust the sanctities of home, and rest safely in a mother's bosom. These conclusions of faith and of the affections are just as legitimate and satisfactory as those of the intellect. From the neglect of this truth or inability to accept it, Thomas abode a whole week in the glacial regions of doubt. Not a glow from the affections melted the frost or chased away the shadows of the grave. He received no prophecy from the utterances of a confiding heart. He refused to believe that his Master

had returned to life until he was allowed to see His wounds and thrust his hand into His side. Thus he remained dumb when the rest of the disciples confessed the authenticity of that light of faith which is intended to shine when the light of reason falls short, or when a dark firmament spreads its mystery overhead.

The Christian's unbelief is unreasonable also. That of Thomas in the text is particularly so. He makes a groundless distinction between the sources of our knowledge and refuses assent to the testimony of others. Hear his own words: "Except I shall see in his hands the print of the nails, and put my fingers into the print of the nails, and thrust my hand into his side, I will not believe." From this one would infer that the testimony of our sight and touch was more trustworthy than that of our other senses; that the nearer we come to an object the better we are able to comprehend it; and that the testimony of two of our own senses outweighs all the evidence which others can present. This is not true. Paul declares that we see only through a glass darkly. Science tells us that we see but the images of things, not the true realities. The sensuous vision is but a mirror upon which the realities cast their shadows. Hence if the doubting disciple had been permitted to see the print of the nails and to thrust his hand into his Saviour's side, it would have been only with double vails between him and them—they would have been hidden from him in a drapery of flesh, and he would have looked through glazed windows of his own organism.

Such proximity to his Master's person as would have enabled Thomas to thrust his hand into his side, would not have added one iota to the certainty of the fact he was seeking to verify. The same thing is true still. The nearer we come to our friends, the more difficult become the problems that present themselves for our consideration. Astronomy is supposed to be the most complete of the sciences. It

has fewer great problems left unanswered than geology, or even psychology. Why ? Because we are not near enough to its vast fields and glowing worlds to come in contact with a tithe of their mysteries. Instead of becoming clearer and more familiar as we approach them, objects of contemplation become more and more obscure. The putting of his fingers into the print of the nails would not have solved the problem which the resurrection of Christ presented to the doubting disciple. It would have increased rather than diminished his perplexities. The rationalistic creed which leads men to reject all they cannot explain only plunges them the deeper into the quagmire. Hence the wisdom of keeping off the confines of that region which lies beyond the field of revelation when we know that at every step we take we are constrained to feel that our eyes are dim and fog-bound, that we have no firm foothold, that the ground is uncertain beneath us and that we cannot in that direction find any comfort or security.

Rejecting the testimony of his fellow disciples, and insisting upon that of his own senses, plunged Thomas the deeper into unbelief. All his colleagues had the testimony not only of their five senses, but also that of their consciousness. A few of them had heard his masterly exposition of Moses and the prophets until their hearts had burned within them; others had melted under his gentle rebuke, and all except Thomas had been cheered by his presence and benediction. He set all these aside, and obstinately declared that he would accept no one's testimony in regard to the fact he was asked to believe, rejecting the truth that faith in the testimony of others is an instinct of human nature, and that to deny the testimony of others is an abnormal state of the mind. Faith is not only an instinct of our nature; but, according to well-known ethical principles, the primal bond of society. Men cannot live without it; they cannot in its absence plan earthly journeys any more

than heavenly ones; to it society is indebted for its very existence, and without it friendship among men would be an impossibility. Nevertheless, there are thousands in our day who set it aside to make room for unbelief.

Notice, secondly, some of the causes of unbelief in the Christian. These are varied and oftentimes difficult to remove. They rise from bodily ailments, mental peculiarities and social surroundings. The skepticism of Thomas rose, in the first place, from a peculiarity of temperament. By temperament we understand the general tendency of the man resulting from his bodily constitution. Scripture and philosophy tell us that the infant receives with its very being certain physical characteristics. Men are classified by the Greeks according to these great principles of their nature. Without claiming scientific authority the inspired writers have dwelt with accuracy on all these matters. The traits that were conspicuous in the life and conduct of Christ's disciples are vividly portrayed by them. From the brief description given of the character of Thomas one concludes that he was a man of a bilious temperament, firm, persevering and ambitious; but at this time, his body was in a disordered state hence he had became melancholic, exclusive and despondent. He looked on the dark side of things and dwelt most of the time in the shade. His mind was not clear, sunny and hopeful. This became apparent in connection with his Master's determination to revisit Judea after the death of Lazarus. He regarded that journey as perilous in the extreme, and felt depressed when he learned that the remonstrance of the disciples had proved unavailing to prevent Him from undertaking it. He was sure that it would cost Him His life, but he made up his mind that their lives would be valueless after He had passed away, hence he exclaimed, "Let us, also, go that we may die with Him." Some have called this true heroism. It forms the theme of that noble German hymn, "Let us go

that we may suffer with Christ, that we may die with Christ, that we may reign with Christ," but this is not a correct interpretation of the apostle's temper. He undoubtedly manifested a species of heroism, but it was the heroism of despair. Thousands of Christians since his day have done the same thing. You are doubtless familiar with the case of Cowper. At times he composed hymns of triumphant hope, but his ordinary temper was that of doubt and despair bordering upon madness. He frequently felt that he was not only drifting on a tempestuous sea without chart or rudder, but lost under a starless sky, rocking over a fiery abyss.

The unbelief of Thomas rose from his mental states as well as from his temperamental peculiarities. Whilst the life of Christ in the souls of believers is the same in its nature, it differs widely in its manifestations. This is seen in the lives of the apostles. It is common to associate with John deep devotion which led him to lean on the Master's bosom. He soared on wings of holy contemplation and ascended at times so high that he seemed to join the multitude which no man can number. In all his life's relations, James was practical. With him the question of obligation and duty was always uppermost. He was not wanting in true devotion, but the air of practical piety rested on all his thoughts and actions. Peter was full of zeal which bordered at times on rashness. Such was his confidence in Christ's power that he jumped out of the ship and awoke to a sense of his hastiness as he was sinking into the deep. Paul, more than any of the other apostles, roamed through the dry fields of principles and doctrine. He was a logician, but a logician free from the unbelief of one who possessed a frigid temperament. Thomas was of an inquiring turn of mind, always hungering and thirsting for evidence. The same varieties of character are seen in the Church of our own day. There are many like John, meditative and devo-

tional; others, like James are eminently practical, always to be depended upon for the performance of every Christian duty; still others, like Peter are impulsive and ready to believe almost anything; some, like Paul, find their richest spiritual food in what many call dry bones; and not a few like Thomas feel it to be impossible to bring up their faith to the approved standard of the Gospel. All these phases of character are consistent with the spiritual life implanted in the soul. None of them could be spared, for they are like the different strings of the harp essential to the grand diapason or general symphony of life.

The unbelief of Thomas is to be traced, thirdly, to reaction consequent upon extraordinary bodily and mental tension. It is well known that bodily exhaustion affects the free operations of the mind, and that mental depression tells upon the condition of the body. Excessive tension of our bodily frame induces excessive relaxation, and that, in its turn, tells upon the tone of the mind. This is a law of our nature. We see it in its full play in the case of Thomas. What scenes he passed through whilst his Master's body lay in the grave. What physical exertion and mental strain were involved in going and coming through the streets of Jerusalem ; in attending this and that trial of the High Priest and Pilate ; in ascending the upper room and descending into the garden ; in following the Saviour to the summit of Calvary and in watching his body as it was carried to the tomb ; in going for days without food and sleep ; in anxiety about the Master and fear of the Roman authorities ; in mental distress concerning the mysteries of Gethsemane and the cross ; in the baffling of reason and the blighting of hope ; in the scattering of the disciples and the apparent extinction of the kingdom that was expected to be established soon upon the earth.

There are seasons still when Christ's followers are weary in body and in mind. They fail to see things as they

are. The rapid changes and abrupt transitions which characterized the days of doubt in the case of Thomas may not occur again, but things of the same sort are sure to try the faith of other believers. The eighteen hundred years that have elapsed since the crucifixion have not solved all the problems connected with the plan of redemption. It remains still a great mystery how Christ could have soothed anguished hearts, and yet himself breathed the bitterest prayer that ever quivered on mortal lips—how he could have conquered death and yet fallen victim to it on the cross —how he could have pleased the Father, and yet the Father be pleased to put him to grief—these are mysteries before which faith may wonder and adore, but which the highest reason is as incapable of explaining as Thomas was to account for the fact of his Master's resurrection.

Still another cause of the apostle's unbelief was the lack of faith in Christ's prediction of his resurrection. His associates as well as himself had either overlooked it, or they had failed to give it the weight it deserved.. Their enemies, on the other hand, had kept it in mind and taken every precaution to keep it from being fulfilled. Whenever belief in God's word has been feeble the Christian virtues have been weak and vascillating. "I have been forced to take notice," says Mr. Baxter, "that our belief in the truth of God's word, and of the life to come, is the spring of all growth in grace, and with which it rises or falls, flourishes or decays, and there is more of this secret unbelief at the bottom than most of us are aware of ; and that our love of the world, our boldness in sin, and our neglect of duty, are from hence. I have often observed in myself," he adds, "that whenever Satan weakened my belief of the Scriptures and of the life to come, my zeal in every religious duty abated with it, and I grew more indifferent than before. But when faith revived, then none of the concerns

of religion appeared small, then men seemed nothing, the world a shadow and God everything."

The only other cause of Thomas's unbelief which I shall mention is his neglect of the ordinances. He was not at the social meeting in which the risen Lord greeted his assembled disciples. No reason is assigned for this absence. If he had had the slightest excuse for not being present to greet the Saviour on his first appearance after his resurrection he would have been only too glad to offer it. The probability is that he separated himself from the rest of the apostles to brood over his disappointment. If he had been at his post of duty, he would have been spared the pangs and painful doubts of eight weary days. The same cause produces its sad results often in our own day. Those who are neglectful of the ordinances of God's house are frequently absent when the panacea for their spiritual ills is furnished. Scores of professed Christians carry heavy hearts and oppressive fears, because they are not present when the message is delivered which would lift up the clouds that hang over them.

Notice, lastly, the way Christ treats the unbelief of His people. An example of this is furnished us in the case of Thomas. It was condescending and kind, quickening to faith, and honoring to God. First, he put himself in the apostle's place and gave full weight to the circumstances of his condition. Amid his mental gloom and strange conduct, he discovered a few feeble glimmerings of faith. Back of the words, "Except I shall see in his hands the print of the nails and put my fingers into the print of the nails," he detected cross currents of emotion proceeding from a little remaining confidence. Thomas was sincere in the conviction that seeing the print of the nails and thrusting his hand into his Master's side would remove his unbelief. He was all wrong, however, but he was not driven back on account of it into the regions of doubt until he corrected his views, nor

was he sent to study more carefully the scriptures, but the Master met him where he was. Since he believed that seeing and touching Christ's body would remove his unbelief, he was invited to "stretch forth his hand and thrust it into his Saviour's side." It is hardly credible that he actually put his fingers into the print of the nails. For the Saviour's loving words must have removed the scales from his eyes and broken the shackles from his feet. He was enabled thereby to leap at a single bound from the depths of despair to the sublime heights of assurance. His declaration, "my Lord and my God," was the clearest and strongest avowal of Christ's divinity that had as yet fallen from any of the apostles' lips.

Multitudes of Christians, in our own day, seek like Thomas an opportunity to thrust their hand into their Master's side. They feel it to be necessary for them to walk the earth by sight. Their faith seems to be obscured by a nebulous environment of unbelief. This is often perhaps the result of confounding its ideal perfection with its real condition. "Faith at best," says Dr. McLaren, "is no full orbed completeness, but a growing segment of reflected light, with many a rough place in its jagged outlines prophetic of increase; with many a deep pit of blackness on its silver surface; with many a storm cloud sweeping across its face, conscious of collapse and subject to change. And yet, it is the light which he has set to rule the night of life, and we may rejoice in its crescent beams." There is no faith so feeble as to receive no kind of response from him who breaks not the bruised reed, nor quenches the smoking flax.

Those who would restore the erring ones in our own day should imitate this example of our Lord. They should come down to their level and give due weight to their surroundings. They must not try them by an abstract or ideal standard. For "there is many a poor soul," as another af-

firms, "who clasps the base of the crucifix and clings to the cross; many a devout heart kneeling before the altar, who sees through the incense-smoke the face of the risen Saviour. The faith that is tied to form, though it be no faith for a man, though in some respects it darkens God's gospel, and brings it down to the level of magical superstition, may yet be, and often is, accepted by him" whose merciful eye recognized and whose condescension answered the mistaken view of Thomas, when he declared that he must thrust his hand into his Saviour's side before he could believe.

Christ met the unbelief of Thomas with unexpected kindness. If the task of restoring him had been committed to Peter, James or John they would have doubtless treated him very differently. The impulsive apostle would probably have advocated excommunication; the radical James would have presented some course of humiliating penance, and the ordinarily mild John would have called for fire from heaven to consume the doubt if not to torture the one who cherished it. That is the way multitudes of Thomas's successors have been treated. In consequence of it some of them are wandering to.day in the mazes of unbelief. Instead of adopting Christ's mode of treatment in their case church authorities often shrink from them as if they were tainted with the plague, or they coldly withdraw from them all feelings of sympathy. Such conduct is not only unwise, but unchristian. For the doubts of many, like those of Thomas, arise from bodily infirmities, misconception of faith, and even from causes largely beyond their control. To turn heartlessly away from such, or to show less interest in their welfare than formerly is sure to sour their temper, if not to drive them to the verge of despair. Their abandonment will be looked upon as a cruel persecution and a cruel persecution usually strengthens men in their errors. The frozen cloak of unbelief cannot

be removed by the beating hailstorm, or the cyclone of passion, but by the heat of a sunny day of love and sympathy,

Christ assures the doubting apostle that faith, not sight. is the principle by which believers are required to walk; "Because thou hast *seen* Me, *thou* hast believed, blessed are they that have not seen and yet have believed." Here is intimated that that state of mind by which one believes a fact when he has not seen it, is higher than that incredulity which refuses to believe until he has seen it. The soul has its own laws of evidence independent of those furnished by the senses. We are not to set aside the latter whilst we remain in the body, but we are not to regard them as the highest or the noblest laws of our being. Nevertheless, there has been a strong tendency in every age to lay greater stress on sight than on faith. The Jews found it well nigh impossible to give up their dependence on the outward rite of circumcision. Many of the early Christians sought material embodiment of spiritual truths. With the rise of the hierarchy the senses were made the rounds of a ladder over which Roman Catholics were told they could climb to heaven. It must be confessed that such outward helps are advantageous to those unaccustomed to abstract reasoning, but they must be used carefully and sparingly, or they will in time be substituted for the true realities. The best and simplest of forms, even those in vogue among the Quakers, are easily made to encroach on faith, by overlying the truth at its root. The eye is in danger of being betrayed to rest on the colors of the variegated window, on the richly adorned altar with its mounted statues, or on the glitter of the sacerdotal vestments, instead of looking through the stained glass, over the marble altar, and by the embroidered mitres, to the things which are not seen, but eternal.

Even in Churches that have but meagre forms thousands in these days are hankering after sensuous sights of God. Their cry is that of Thomas, "Except I shall

see in his hands the print of the nails and put my finger into the print of the nails I will not believe." They allege that before God can command their faith, He must approach them through some of the channels that carry the knowledge of earthly things. They insist upon his presenting himself within the range of those tests by which they are accustomed to decide between truth and semblance, realities and appearances. They feel that He has not as yet done that. They cry we have never heard His voice nor felt the touch of His hand.

Christ's benediction upon those who have not seen and yet have believed, hushes forever the boast of unaided reason in matters of religion. This is not based upon any doubtful, or novel, theory of mental or moral philosophy; but it is in perfect keeping with the general tenor of our mental processes. "Reason is never so magnified," says an English writer, "as when made the pedestal on which faith stands. A proposition, for example, is submitted; instantly an intellectual operation is commenced; the judgment begins to balance conflicting claims and to determine the credibility of opposing witnesses; up to a given point, the light of the understanding shines brightly on the whole process; at that point, however, the materials on which reason has been operating are exhausted, and yet reason itself knows that something more remains, feels that another step should be taken, trembles consciously on the verge of the ultimate truth of what it has long been in quest, and the act of passing from the known to the unknown is an act of faith, an act which has been compelled by reason, an act which expresses the final convictions of judgment, an act in which intellect takes wing and reason commits itself to the most probable issues of its own calculations."

Friends of the graduating class: I desire, before closing, to offer you two or three words of counsel. First, do not from restlessness, love of novelty or a disposition to

quiet popular clamor re-open hastily great questions that are already settled. This is one of the faults of our times. It creates unnecessary suspicion and leads to serious doubts where there is no cause for them. On account of inability to bring his disappointed heart to believe that his buried Lord had been alive, Thomas called in question the doctrine of the resurrection. He had been present when two or three persons were raised from the dead, hence he should have accepted it without question. His efforts ought to have been directed to harmonize what seemed strange to him in the way, the time and the circumstances of Christ's resurrection. This is the plan pursued by scientists when they meet with facts that do not appear to agree with an established law. When the astronomer discovers phenomena which militate against the great law of gravitation, he does not begin by reconsidering the accepted law, but by seeking to find a way to account for these phenomena without disturbing it. When it is found that immaterial forces give rise to what has been supposed to be the products of matter, the true philosopher does not conclude that there is no such thing as matter, nor that all we see is the result of force. When feathers are seen flying towards the sun the wise man does not hastily conclude that the earth has ceased to be a great magnet attracting all objects to itself, but he inquires into the causes of what seems to be an exception to the rule. Let me urge you to deal in like manner with the Scriptures. If the antiquarian chances to fall upon objects in the tombs of Egypt, or among the ruins of Assyria; if the chemist comes across anomalies in the laboratory; if the geologist discovers unaccountable relics in the bowels of the earth; if the astromer finds unheard-of worlds in the depths of space; or if the historian reads on some faded parchments facts or figures that seem to be subversive of Bible doctrines, do not conclude on these slender data that the inspired writings are false. Pursue

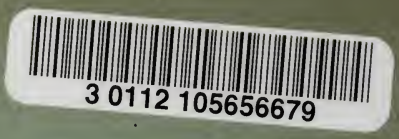
your investigation, and see if no clue can be found to a way of reconciling the two. Remember that science is young and its most advanced students are as yet only in the primer. They have only gathered a few facts here and there and put them together in the best way they can. They are doing nobly. Encourage them as long as they use their energies in discovering truth. Instead of expecting this and that fact of science to contradict the teachings of Scripture act upon the presumption that both have been given by God, hence they must harmonize however contradictory they may at first sight seem. And thus far they have been found to do so. Notwithstanding the allegations to the contrary, no discoveries of bones imbedded in the earth, of footprints found in the geological strata, or of musty manuscripts dug out of ancient convents, have as yet unsettled the foundations of God's revealed will. Amidst all the noise and clatter of instruments working to-day at the foundations of temples and cities, "The Word of the Lord standeth sure."

I counsel you secondly, to seek a sure foundation for your present happiness and your joy. The things which are seen are temporal. They do not, therefore, form a fit foundation for the hopes of an immortal being. "If you build upon gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, stubble, your work will be made manifest for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is." When you have discovered the true foundation see to it that the superstructure is carefully and wisely reared thereon. This superstructure must be a noble character shaped after the heavenly model. Its formation will demand the concentration of all your powers of soul and body. Spasmodic efforts, working by jerks and starts, running well for a time, will not answer. You must save every grain of time, seize all the opportunities placed within your reach,

and keep in working order every power of your being. The highest gifts, if allowed to lie dormant, accomplish nothing, they may even grow weak and worthless by disuse, but when they are concentrated and wisely applied, they may turn the world upside down. It is not necessary that one should occupy conspicuous places in order to make his life sublime. The wild flowers that abound in our ravines are as delicate and fragrant as those which adorn our most sumptuous dwellings. The heavenly bodies most admired by astronomers are not Venus with all her delicate beauty, nor Jupiter with his conceded grandeur, but those modest planets which are seen only when searched for by the telescope, or those far off stars the radiance of which has but lately appeared, because they are so high in the remoteness of their sphere from vulgar gaze.

> "For were the distance riven,
> Our eyes might find that star which faintly shone
> Because it journeyed through a higher zone,
> Had more majestic sway and duties given
> Far loftier station on the heights of heaven,
> Was next to God, and circled round his throne."

I counsel you, in conclusion, to have your soul permeated with the spirit of the Great Teacher. The noblest of all lives is that which is brought into strict conformity to his blessed image. Keep him always before you as your model. Do not study even the best copies of him, but the original only. Drink of his spirit, walk as he walked and imitate his perfect example. Follow him to the mount that you may catch the full meaning of his matchless sermon; sit with him at the festal board that you may be quickened by his table talk; walk with him through the fields and valleys of Palestine that you may learn how to live; and accompany him to the cross that you may know how to die.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